

Alan L. Benford
25F Cliffside Drive
Manchester, CT 06042-3465

March 8, 2011

Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee:

Shown below is the testimony I was prepared to give at the hearing on Monday, March 7. I was unable to stay until my name would have come up, so I am submitting it to you in writing. At the end, I will add some additional comments based on something I heard at the hearing.

Testimony on Raised SB 1035
An Act Concerning the Repeal of the Death Penalty
March 7, 2011

Chairman and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am Al Benford, a resident of Manchester and a member of the Unitarian Universalist Society: East. I will leave it to others to address the financial and discrimination considerations in the administration of the death penalty as it exists today. I will address the moral issue in the best way I know how.

I grew up in a traditional Christian home, learning the 10 Commandments among other religious principles. Those principles still guide my life, although as a UU, I take inspiration from a wider variety of religions and modes of thought. One of the Commandments was "Thou shalt not kill." I have heard that expressed with some variations, but "Thou shalt not kill" I think best represents its meaning. It does not list any exceptions to the rule, although over centuries, cultures have carved out what they see as exceptions, including executing people who have killed others. I see that as adding a crime to the first crime.

As a Unitarian Universalist, I try my best to live up to the UU principles, the first of which is to affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person. That does not say "every person we like" and that would not be much of a challenge. The challenge comes in respecting the worth and dignity of those we don't like and those who have committed horrible acts. If God created the earth and its people, God created those who commit crimes. Who among us would purposely destroy something or someone that God created?

Does a society have a right to protect itself? Without question. Does it have the right to do so by taking a life? I believe not. While my inspiration comes from my religious

March 15, 2011

State Representative Gerald M. Fox
Legislative Office Building
Room 2502
Hartford, CT 06106-1591

Dear Representative Fox:

I am contacting you in regard to Senate Bill No. 6389 "An Act Transferring The Responsibilities Of The Division Of Special Revenue, Consumer Counsel, Healthcare Advocate And Board Of Accountancy To The Department Of Consumer Protection", which is currently before the Legislature. This proposal moves the Division of Special Revenue to the Department of Consumer Protection, but it does not include retaining or moving the Charitable Games Unit. Furthermore, it appears that this proposal would either eliminate charitable games such as sealed tickets, bingo, raffles and bazaars entirely by making them illegal, thereby depriving numerous nonprofit groups with an effective and necessary means of fundraising, or it will leave these games legal but in an openly unregulated environment. Either way, there are grave concerns over that portion of the proposed Bill that would eliminate the Charitable Games Unit from the Division of Special Revenue. The end result will likely be costly for the State of Connecticut and is in no way a savings in revenue.

This proposal will adversely affect the nonprofit community and the State. In today's difficult economy, nonprofit organizations are struggling to raise the necessary resources to fulfill their missions. Many organizations face declining membership and must rely on charitable games to maintain their community support programs or raise funds for their worthy purposes. Last fiscal year, nonprofit organizations in the state realized a net profit of \$13,562,793 from the conduct of charitable gaming activities. If charitable games are rendered illegal, many nonprofit organizations will be forced to close their doors or look elsewhere for funding. Programs and vital social services will be affected since many rely on contributions from charitable games for a portion of their funding. Loss of these programs will have a negative impact, and prove to be more costly to the State.

On the other hand, it is possible the law might be interpreted to render charitable games legal, but would eliminate the regulatory oversight of the activities. It is important to note that there is no state in the nation that has legalized but unregulated charitable gaming activities. Gambling is a cash business, and charitable games activities are no exception. In the State of Connecticut, nearly \$42 million was wagered in 2009 on charitable games. While most groups that conduct charitable games are honorable and well intentioned, it only takes a few less than honest individuals to scam the system or embezzle from their organizations and destroy the credibility of an organization. A

scandal can ruin an organization financially if patrons are no longer confident in the integrity of the games and, therefore, go elsewhere to play. All it can take is a single doubt about the integrity of games conducted by a particular nonprofit organization to stop patrons from attending or playing these games, which means a potential loss of revenue for nonprofit organizations. Without regulatory oversight of these activities, public confidence in the honesty and fairness of the games may no longer be ensured. Unregulated activity increases the likelihood of individuals scamming the system in the form of phony nonprofit groups, embezzlement by volunteer members, and money going to illegal or illegitimate operations. Scandals of this nature are usually due to a lack of government oversight. The elimination of regulatory oversight of charitable gaming activities will undoubtedly create a haven for illegal activity by attracting crooks from surrounding states where charitable games are highly regulated. The Charitable Games Unit provides effective regulatory and investigatory oversight of the activities, which protect the profits of the nonprofit groups and ensures that the revenue realized from the conduct of the activities goes directly toward their worthy purposes. Furthermore, the Unit conducts criminal history checks on the volunteer members of the organizations who are handling the monies raised through these activities. Many organizations are unaware that members have a criminal past until the criminal history check has been completed. This helps to protect an organization from fraudulent activity.

The Governor's proposed budget lists a savings of a little over \$1,000,000 through elimination of the Charitable Games Unit, which is inaccurate to say the least. The Charitable Games Unit is a self-sustaining program. The total estimated program expenditures for the current fiscal year are \$797,595. During the first half of the current fiscal year, transfers to the General Fund totaled \$430,652, making the projected total transfers to the General Fund for the fiscal year \$861,304, which is a net gain of \$63,709. The Charitable Games Unit also generates revenue from the collection of registration and permit fees. Last fiscal year, a total of \$75,480 was collected in registration/permit fees from all charitable gaming activities. If the same revenue is realized in registration and permit fees this fiscal year, that would bring the total projected net revenue generated by the Charitable Games Unit to \$139,189. Clearly, the Charitable Games Unit is self-funding, and its elimination would actually lose revenue for the State rather than save a \$1,000,000, as has been misreported.

Please reconsider this proposal to eliminate charitable games from the State of Connecticut, and/or the elimination of the regulation of charitable games activities, whichever is the intent of the proposed legislation. The proposal will not save the State any money. It will only devastate many nonprofit groups, and it may create an environment for illegal activity that will prove to be far more costly to control. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Concerned Citizens Of CT